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Russell, in Senate 30 Years, Strives To Maintain the Chamber's Traditions

By JACK BELL

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Richard Brevard Russell, D-Ga., rounds out 30 years of Senate service Saturday, primed to meet what he calls a new assault on that body's constitutional traditions.

Not only is the 65-year-old bachelor a key member of the Democratic Policy Committee which passes on all bills before they reach the Senate floor, but he holds several other influential posts.

He is chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, is a member of both the Appropriations and Space Committees, as well as of the Senate-House Atomic Energy Committee. This vantage point permits Russell to keep a finger on nearly every government decision—including foreign policy matters involving the Pentagon.

CIA BRIEFINGS

Russell is one of the very few in Congress who receives briefings on activities of the Central Intelligence Agency.

To the public generally, Russell appears to be much more a champion of a sectional view than of the Constitution. But the Russell who maneuvers behind the scenes is completely a Senate man who moves in a broad spectrum of national affairs.

Even many who disagree with Russell—particularly his opinions on segregation—profess admiration for him as a gentleman and respect for him as a tactician.

Russell is a quick man at saying no if he doesn't like what's going on. Administration leaders from President Kennedy on down have learned that.

FAVORED ATTACK

When congressional leaders received a briefing from President Kennedy prior to his announcement of quarantine action against Cuba, Russell vigorously urged a more drastic course. He asserted that while the quarantine plan might get the offensive missiles out of Cuba, the only way to topple Fidel Castro was for the U.S. to strike in force.

The senator told the President: "I think we should go in there

and clean them out."

At that point, Secretary of State Rusk protested that President Kennedy could not order what Rusk called a "sneak attack" such as the Japanese made on Pearl Harbor.

The senator countered by saying that Kennedy had put Castro on notice in two speeches that the United States would act to prevent any aggressive buildup. Also, he pointed to a resolution Kennedy had signed which gave the President congressional backing on any action he felt necessary in the crisis.

BACKED BY FULBRIGHT

Russell had support for his invasion stand from Senate Foreign Relations Chairman William Fulbright of Arkansas. Whereupon Kennedy told the group he was going on television in less than an hour and had already sent a copy of his speech to British Prime Minister Macmillan.

Russell exploded, declaring: "Well, if you had told us that before I wouldn't have wasted my time raising the issue."

A seasoned veteran of many filibuster battles, Russell heads Southern opponents of civil rights measures ready to talk to death any proposed rules changes.

Bipartisan liberals, determined to give a majority the right to shut off debate, are trying to change the rule which requires that two-thirds of those voting approve such action. In Russell's view, this is a threat to the Senate's claim to being the last bastion of free expression on earth.

As clearly as any one man can, the Georgia senator represents the brand of conservatism that has linked Southern Democrats with Republicans in a coalition that frequently controls Senate action on controversial legislation.

He has become even more conservative since those early days when he backed Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal with votes for social security, the National Recovery Act and the Tennessee Valley Authority.